

## Cure for a Joyless Life, Part 1 - Acts 26:12-18 – June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010

- At the request of Governor Festus, Paul has been testifying before King Agrippa here in this amphitheater on the beach of Caesarea.
- Paul, though he has made his appeal to Caesar will end up in Rome just as the Lord told him he would, presents his case once again.
- It's important to understand that he has been both falsely accused, and unjustly imprisoned here in Caesarea for the past two years.

- Paul knows everything is going perfectly according to God's divine schedule as he seizes yet another opportunity to present the Gospel.
- What's interesting about this Gospel presentation is not just "that" Paul preaches salvation in Jesus Christ it is "how" Paul preaches it.
- He ever so beautifully and masterfully weaves how he met Jesus Christ - into the fabric of his preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

- This then begs the question of why the beloved Apostle talks about how he got saved instead of just preaching how they can get saved.
- I believe that the answer to this question may also be the answer and solution to many of the problems we face in our Christian lives.
- Sometimes the simple solution can be found in going back to the basics. It's in a returning to - and restoring of - the joy of our salvation.

- Perhaps this is one reason the Holy Spirit had Luke record this detailed account of Paul presenting his personal salvation experience.
- One of the most striking aspects of the Apostle Paul's life was the pronounced importance he placed on his own salvation experience.
- I would suggest that our salvation experience reveals the secret of a life that is joyful and powerful instead of joyless and powerless.

- It's for this reason that I have titled this series; "Cure for a Joyless Life." Standing before Agrippa, Paul tells of the joy of his salvation.
- This would seem to explain how it is that he was even able to present his case before this audience in such a magnificent way.
- It had to be that he was drawing from a deep well that would never run dry, and it served as a source of limitless and tireless strength.

- Maybe for you there's no more drinking from the cup of joy because it's empty, and the height to which you had grown is now stunted.
- I think the Lord would have us to both hear and heed what it is that He wants to speak to us - in and through the text that is before us.
- The scriptures are replete with both examples and exhortations of how it is that we, like Paul, can have joyful and powerful lives.

**Psalms 16:11** You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. NKJV

- After the rebuilding of the wall in Jerusalem under the leadership of Nehemiah, Ezra opens and reads the Word of God to the people.
- They then become so overwhelmed by and even grieved because of what they heard in the word that they begin to weep and mourn.
- It's at this point that Nehemiah steps in and tells them that this is not a time for mourning, but rather this is a time for joyful celebrating.

**Nehemiah 8:10** Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." NIV

- After King David committed adultery with Bathsheba and committed murder with her husband Uriah, he had become empty and dry.

**Psalms 32:3-4** 3 When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. 4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. NIV

- He then cries out unto the Lord begging Him to restore the joy he had once experienced and it comes vis-à-vis his salvation experience.

**Psalms 51:12** Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. KJV

- When the Apostle Paul, by the Holy Spirit, writes his epistle to the church in Galatia, he lists what comes from the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

**Galatians 5:22-23** 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. NIV

- In the book of Revelation chapters two and three, Jesus dictates to the Apostle John seven letters to seven churches in Asia Minor.
- In His first letter to the first church of Ephesus He tells them they left their first love then tells them the secret to having it once again..

**Revelation 2:4-5** Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. 5 Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. NIV

- It is from this passage that I wish to create a textual template with which to learn the secret cure for a life that has become joyless.
- Jesus tells them that there are three things they can do to have the love and the joy they once had; "remember, repent and repeat."
- Paul seemingly uses this template his Gospel presentation by remembering his repentance and repeating his salvation experience.

### 1. Seeing the Light (Verses 12-13)

12 "On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. 13 About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions.

- v12 Paul tells Agrippa that he was authorized and commissioned by the chief priests to go to Damascus in order to arrest Christians.
- v13 He then says that while on the road at about noon, he saw a very bright light from heaven blazing around him and those with him.

- Paul is remembering the day of his salvation on that road to Damascus and gives them a detailed account of when he first saw the light.
- Question; "why is the account of our salvation experience so important?" I believe it's because we're prone to both doubt and forget.
- Let me explain; if we forget when, where, and how we first saw the light, then we will likely doubt God and His goodness when it's dark.

**Psalms 112:4** Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man. NIV

**Psalms 97:11** Light is shed upon the righteous and joy on the upright in heart. NIV

## 2. Ceasing the struggle (Verse 14)

14 We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

- v14 He says they fell to the ground and he heard a voice telling him; "why do you persecute me and it's hard to kick against the goads."
- Remember what it was like before you were saved. Remember how hard it was for you to fight against and struggle against the Lord.
- This is why Paul is including this detail as he speaks to this large audience of people. He knows how hard it is for them as well.

**Proverbs 13:15** Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard. KJV

## 3. Witnessing for Jesus (Verses 15-16)

15 "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. 16'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you.

- v15 Paul tells Agrippa how he responded by asking; "Who are you, Lord?" The Lord replies; "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."
- v16 Jesus tells Paul to get up and stand on his feet because He is appointing him as a witness of what he's seen and yet to be shown.
- Let me ask you this; do you remember how often you told other people about Jesus when you were first saved? What about now?

## 4. Receiving God's forgiveness (Verses 17-18)

17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them 18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

- v17 The Lord tells Paul that he will be rescued from both the Jews and Gentiles because he's being sent to present the Gospel to them.
- v18a He then tells Paul that He wants to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.
- v18b He then goes on to say that this is so they may receive forgiveness of sins in their salvation and their subsequent sanctification.
- This wraps it all together and fills in all the blanks in that this is the key to our understanding of the role forgiveness plays in a joyful life.

**Luke 7:36-50** 36 Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. 37 When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, 38 and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. 39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner." 40 Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. 41 "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said. 44 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46 You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." 48 Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49 The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" 50 Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." NIV

- The common denominator between her and Paul was that they'd both been forgiven of much. She was a fornicator, he a murderer.